

From: Chris Lurvey

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Subject: Smokey Point Behavioral Hospital

Honorable Senators, State Representatives, and Mayors,

I am writing you concerning our new Mental Health Hospital, Smokey Point Behavioral Hospital. Currently in our State there is a great need for mental health care, and the opening of a new hospital was a milestone for our region. However, as a former member of the hospital, and speaking on behalf of nearly the entire staff who fear the loss of their jobs if they speak out, this facility is extremely detrimental to the health of the patients and the staff. With the hospital being woefully understaffed and mismanaged, patient treatment has been almost entirely ignored. When the Chief Nursing Officer, CEO, and parent company, US Health Vest have been notified, staff has been told to ignore state and federal laws.

Some of the issues are: not having basic supplies for patients, such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, socks, underwear, deodorant, soap and shampoo. The facility itself is very dirty and unhygienic, with patients and staff constantly complaining the hospital's management about the conditions there. There have been numerous suicide attempts as well as frequent self-harm of patients that have been ignored, numerous physical fights between patients, who are then made roommates of left as roommates, numerous injuries to staff due to understaffing, not being able to take any breaks or lunch breaks due to staffing, and inability to do ANY group sessions, which the patients and insurance companies are being paid for, due to only having a nurse and mental health technician to care for a unit of 15 to 28 patients, many who meet a staffing criteria of 1:5, or 1:1.

Staff is under constant video surveillance, with any deficiencies on their part being swiftly and harshly dealt with, while in the same videos the patient care is being ignored, with the hospital management saying they have never seen it. An example is a doctor ordering staff to allow an adolescent patient to harm herself and to "just clean up the blood after she is done." When skin checks are being done on adolescents, corporate policy is for two staff of the same sex as the patient to be present, but due to staff shortages, adolescents from 12 years old to 18 years old are having to expose their privates to members of the opposite sex against their will.

Due to management trying to fill every bed, it is common place for patients to be stuck into any open bed, regardless of their diagnosis and age. For example, young patients being stuck on a geriatric unit, high acuity patients being stuck on a low acuity unit, or patients that are on a 5' restriction from each other being made roommates. High acuity patients, patients who have tried to commit suicide in the facility, or violent patients, all who require a 1:1 staffing ratio are being allowed to freely roam without escort, and the required constant supervision, 5 minute checks and 15 minute checks are being completely ignored due to staffing. There have even been cases of patients being stuck in a seclusion room because there were no open beds available! When self admitted patients ask to leave Against Medical Advice, they are frequently told "too bad, your not going anywhere", and numerous patients have told myself and other staff that they are worse when they leave than when they arrived. Despite a patients condition, it is common practice to see patients kicked out the second that their insurance runs out, even if they are suicidal or homicidal.

Lastly, with a new military unit being opened at Smokey Point Behavioral Hospital, I worry for the veterans, reservists, and active duty service members. They will not receive adequate care in this facility, and it would be a great injustice for them to be sent somewhere with such deplorable conditions.

I implore you to step in and correct the issues faced in this hospital so that the patients can receive the care that they so badly need, and rightly deserve.

Thank you for your time, and please contact me if you need any further information or have any question.

Very Respectfully,

Christopher Lurvey, SGT, USA Retired